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really pay the Lockerbie settlement for the Pan-Am 103 bombing, but instead U.S. companies paid for the Lockerbie settlement by purchasing Libyan oil. Similarly, the official Libyan stance is that the Operation El Dorado Canyon air strikes on Libya in 1986 were a U.S. failure and that Libya won against the "American aggression" by surviving the bombing raid.

16. (C) One sign that there might be a shift in the Libyan insistence that the medical personnel are guilty and that compensation must be paid can be found in a recent press statement from the group representing the infected Libyans. The statement of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya Civil Society for the Care of the Infected Children organization was released via the internet and not through the local papers, so it would not have wide circulation in Libya. Therefore, the intended audience is the international community.

The statement says that the families of the Libyan victims value EU Commissioner for External Relations Ferrero's (sic) initiatives on behalf of the Benghazi children. It also expresses appreciation for the efforts by the German government as the current EU chair. It also noted that the UK, while acting as the EU chair, worked to set up the Benghazi International Support Fund and initiated a dialogue with the victim's families through the Qadhafi Development Foundation. It emphasizes its appreciation for "representatives of the international community that have shown all respect for the feelings of the families and understanding of what their children have suffered through this humanitarian tragedy and respect for the justice of their situation." Whereas most previous statements have focused strongly on compensation and retribution, this press release emphasizes appreciation for people who empathize with the infected children. The release is signed by Omar al-Kilani al-Mismari and Idris Hamad Lagha as "representatives of the families of the Libyan Child Victims of the AIDS Disaster."

17. (C) At the same time, the press statement calls attention to a scientific study issued in the U.S. It says, "the children's families appeal to the Arab and international scientific and legal community to take greater interest in the new scientific studies by specialists from the Biotechnology Center of South Carolina and from the American Calvin University which reveal more evidence about what happened in Benghazi Children's Hospital in 1998. Libyans are using the new study released in South Carolina to support their claim that the infections must have been deliberate. In contrast, world-renowned HIV experts dismiss the study as "scientific drivel", but unfortunately, the Libyans are claiming that since the study comes from the U.S. it must be authoritative proof of the medics' guilt. The Libyan Medical Board is particularly sensitive to criticism that the infections were spread by poor sanitation and medical practice. Since the South Carolina study concludes that it would be unusual for an infection to be spread by poor sanitation in only one hospital, the Libyans are using the study to exonerate themselves of accusations of poor sanitation across the board.

18. (C) COMMENT. We are not familiar with the "Biotechnology Center of South Carolina" or the "American Calvin University." If they exist and have issued such a study, it is unfortunate that the U.S. scientific community is being used by the Libyan medical establishment to refute independent studies by the world's leading HIV experts that the infections developed and spread through the patient population in a manner inconsistent with deliberate criminal intent, but similar to outbreaks in hospital populations in other countries such as Romania. That

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only makes it more difficult to hope for a ruling by the Libyan appeals courts that the case should be thrown out based on scientific evidence. It is widely anticipated that the Supreme Court will confirm the guilty verdict and death sentence sometime before May 17. Embassy expects that there will be another upsurge of Libyan press statements dramatizing the suffering of the Libyans with HIV and AIDs at that time. At the same time, the ongoing defamation cases against the medics brought by the security officials schedule for another hearing about May 6. It is widely anticipated that the medics will be found guilty of defaming Libyan security by claiming that they were tortured while in police custody. If, as expected, the guilty verdicts in the infection case are upheld by the Supreme Court then the Libyan Higher Judicial Council will consider the verdicts. The Higher Judicial Council includes Libyan "cabinet" officials as well as judicial officers and would be the mechanism to arrange some way for the medics to depart Libya. END COMMENT. GOLDRICH